

**Statement of Rep. Edward Markey  
Upon the Introduction of the  
Udall-Eisenhower Arctic Wilderness Act  
February 2, 2005**

Today I am introducing, with Rep. Nancy Johnson and over 100 of my colleagues, legislation that would permanently protect the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge from development by granting it full wilderness status, consistent with the rest of the Refuge. The **Udall-Eisenhower Arctic Wilderness Act of 2005** honors two great visionaries by protecting, in their name, this extraordinary piece of America's wilderness. Republican President Dwight D. Eisenhower began the bipartisan legacy to protect this majestic land when he set aside the core of the Refuge in 1960. Twenty years later, in 1980, Democratic Representative Morris Udall succeeded in doubling the size of the Refuge, thereby protecting even more of this pristine wilderness from oil drilling. As Mo Udall said at the time,

**“In our lifetime, we have few opportunities to shape the very Earth on which our descendants will live their lives. In each generation, we have carved up more and more of our once-great natural heritage. There ought to be a few places left in the world the way the Almighty made them.”**

President Eisenhower and Mo Udall had the vision to protect a remote but very special piece of wilderness for America's future generations. It is now our responsibility to stop those who would tear down this legacy. This legislation would, at long last, complete the job they began.

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is a national treasure. It is a federal land given legal protection so that the pressures of development today do not over-run the need to preserve for tomorrow a unique place for the undisturbed enjoyment of future generations. The Arctic Refuge does not belong to the oil companies; it does not belong to one party; it does not belong to one state. It is a public wilderness trust, and we are the trustees.

The coastal plain of the Refuge is the biological heart of the ecosystem and is critical to the survival of caribou, polar bears, and over 160 species of birds. A Department of the Interior study suggests that oil development would contribute to a 20-40 percent decline in the Refuge's caribou population, and similar declines in wolverine and musk oxen populations. When you drill in the heart, every other part of the biological system suffers.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service calls the coastal plain the “center for wildlife activity” in the Refuge. If the drillers get their way, a refuge for wildlife will become something else – a place for caribou, grizzlies, polar bears and wolves to practice their social skills with oil riggers, pipelines, roads, pumping stations, bulldozers, helicopters, airstrips, and everything else necessary for a state-of-the-art “environmentally-conscious” oil field. Like their counterparts in the zoo, the wildlife will be required to adapt to living in an oil field, and they will be “wildlife” no more. A place that has been “forever wild” will be gone -- gone forever -- never to be retrieved.

If Congress authorizes drilling in the Refuge, it will scar an untouched landscape, evict wildlife from its traditional habitats, turn tundra potholes for ducks into catch basins for drilling wastes, and provide a precedent to invade every other wildlife refuge in the United States of America.

Let's be clear – if we want to be able to protect the wildlife refuge system later, we must protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge now.

You have surely heard the argument that we have no choice, that we have soldiers in the oil fields of the Middle East that need to come home, that we must reduce our dependence on oil from unstable foreign suppliers.

Let's be clear again – we have a choice, a better choice, and the sooner we steer the debate away from drilling for 6 months worth of oil in the Arctic Refuge, the sooner we can actually do something real about oil imports.

The United States consumes 25 percent of the world's oil but control only 3 percent of the world's reserves. 76 percent of those reserves are controlled by the OPEC cartel; that is our weakness. Our strength lies not in sacrificing our wildlands; our strength lies in harnessing our technological genius. We are a technological superpower. It is time to start acting like one.

From an energy standpoint, drilling in the wildlife refuge is completely unnecessary. Transportation – cars, SUVs, and trucks -- account for approximately three-quarters of all U.S. oil consumption. If we improve the average fuel economy of cars, mini-vans, and SUV's by just 3 miles per gallon, we save more oil within ten years than would ever be produced from drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Technology already exists that will allow us to dramatically increase fuel economy, not just by 3 mpg, but by 15 mpg or more – five times the amount the industry could possibly drill out of the Refuge.

The debate over drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is surreal when you consider that the country which is sending our young men and women abroad to shed their blood in the Middle East oilfields is the same country which subsidizes the consumption of oil at home as if it were an infinite resource.

Let me cite just one obscene example. The Administration's current energy policy provides \$35,000 in tax deductions for the purchase of a Hummer, but a mere \$2000 for the purchase of a hybrid vehicle. A hybrid gets 50 miles per gallon, a Hummer gets 10 miles-per-gallon. Do the math. Oil is not infinite, but our capacity to subsidize the waste of oil seems boundless. The Administration's energy policy is like a hamster spinning in his wheel – lots of activity, no progress. According to the Administration's own Energy Information Administration, passage of the Energy Act will result in our dependence on foreign oil soaring from less than 65 percent today to 80 percent in 2025.

The public understands that. In a recent Zogby poll, Americans soundly rejected the link between drilling in the wildlife refuge and energy independence.

- Only one in six respondents agreed that more domestic oil drilling is the way to reduce our foreign oil dependence.
- More than two-thirds believe the United States should promote increased fuel economy and alternative energies instead of drilling
- Americans have also made it clear to Congress that they disagree with attempts to make an end run around the legislative process by cramming the fate of the Arctic Refuge into the 2005 Budget resolution.. The people of America recently expressed their disapproval of this “backdoor maneuver” by a margin of fifty-nine to twenty-five percent.

Even the oil companies have publicly announced that they are shifting their focus away from the Arctic Refuge and toward fields in other parts of the North Slope of Alaska; so should Congress. BP, ConocoPhillips and ChevronTexaco have all quietly walked away from this political drilling frenzy, suggesting that there are higher priorities for the oil industry than drilling in this refuge. Is it possible that oil companies know something that the politicians do not?

If we allow this Congress to turn the Coastal Plain of the Arctic Refuge into an industrial footprint, the impact on the land and the wildlife would be permanent and the hoped-for energy benefit only temporary. Let us join the American people in saying, unequivocally, that there are places that are so rare, so special, so unique that we simply will not drill there as long as alternatives exist.

We have an opportunity to preserve the Arctic Refuge as the magnificent wilderness the way God made it. It is arrogant and immoral to sacrifice this ecological gem when we have better ways to meet our energy needs, and no other place with such environmental significance on Earth.

We do not dam Yosemite Valley for hydropower.

We do not strip mine Yellowstone for coal.

And we should not drill for oil and gas in the Arctic Refuge.

Thank you.